## Third Place – Middle School/ Fiction

## The Hope from Lily

By Anna Tyler

The battle raged on around King Luke; but he was unaware of his people dying and screaming in agony, for he too was in pain. This war had caused too much suffering. The war itself was too much for his army to handle.

His kingdom was under attack because another ruler was power-hungry. That ruler took one look at Luke's country and decided that it was more than satisfying to his needs; for Luke's kingdom was the largest in the distant lands. But that ruler had no stomach for negotiating in friendly ways. His only option was violence.

Tears welled up in Luke's eyes as he recalled the event that took his daughters life.

The opposing ruler planned an invasion on Luke's castle and carried it out with perfection. All of the soldiers he planned to get in, got in and held Luke's daughter, Lily, captive. The ransom they demanded was his kingdom. Luke saw no other option but to agree to the odious ruler's terms. The King loved his daughter more than life itself. But just as Luke was about to agree, his second in command burst through the doors, swinging his sword and attacked all twenty of the enemies that were guarding Lily.

Luke admired and respected his seconds' courage but saw many flaws in the plan.

In desperation Luke threw himself in the battle with a mighty cry, swinging his own sword in order to get to Lily before something awful happened.

He was too late.

The spear entered Lily's body while she wasn't looking. Slowly, it dawned on him that Lily was looking for him when the spear flew. Time slowed as he rushed to his only daughter. Her breathing was erratic and he could see the life slowly draining from her body.

He knelt down by her side and wiped a hair from her cheek. Then, in a barely audible voice she whispered, "Father, you must listen to me'

Feeling he had no choice, Luke said. "Anything for my flower."

"Father, you must prevail in this war. You cannot let the selfish take away from us.

There are people in this country who look up to your strength and find their hope and future.

Father..." Lily broke into an unfriendly fit of coughs.

Luke feeling no strength at all in this situation found himself wiping away tears from his own eyes.

Lily continued, "Father you must be strong for your kingdom and me if not you. This land was the land where you found your inspiration to name me: The lily of the valley. Where would you go, and what would you have, without your kingdom."

The King could not hide his sorrow as huge sobs racked his body.

Lily then took pity on him and said, "Father, do not grieve for me. For you can find me in the flowers."

And with those final words, she breathed her last and was gone.

As King Luke returned to the present with the awful images of her death fresh in his mind, he remembered all of her words. For just then he saw a break in the dark clouds above him. And below, he saw the field of Lily's. Renewed with hope for the kingdom he found a cause worth fighting for. He found hope in Lily.